

Abner Baker House
318 West Mansion Street
Marshall
Calhoun County
Michigan

HABS No. MI-236

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MICH,
13-MARSH,
8-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN ARCHITECTURAL DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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ABNER BAKER HOUSE

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Location: 318 West Mansion Street at Kalamazoo Street
Marshall, Calhoun County, Michigan

PART I. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: An attractive representative mid-19th century "Gothic Cottage," retaining many original features and with a carriage house.
2. Condition of fabric: Good. Some exterior wood trim needs painting. Some small mouldings have been lost. There are a few cracks in the masonry.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: 38'-1" x 40'-3"; the front faces south.
2. Foundations: Foundation walls are of field stone, stuccoed above grade on the exterior; they extend about 2'-6" above ground on the average. At the top, two projecting courses of brick form a water table.
3. Wall construction: Exterior walls are brick laid in American bond with one header course alternating with six stretcher courses. The brick are now painted dark red, although their natural color is a moderately deep salmon red.
4. Structural system: Floors are framed with hewn girders and sawn joists. One bearing partition is brick, above a stone foundation; the others are frame.
5. Porches: An old drawing (1858 map) shows a shallow porch filling in the east corner of the south front, a three-bay west porch with deck, and a four-bay porch connecting with the carriage house (at the northwest). Only the former remains, in an enlarged form. It is deeper and wider than originally, but appears to have the same kind of detailing. It shelters the central entrance now, in addition to filling the corner. The roof is flat.

Two octagonal columns before the entrance, and one at the southwest corner, have moulded bases and capitals; half-columns respond on the wall. Above the capital is an octagonal neck, which is moulded at the top. A simple three-part entablature above is a modern replacement, as is the matched and beaded ceiling. Paint markings on the column necks indicate that a tracery arch may have been there at one time.

A railing with turned balusters appears to be a replacement, as are three steps with a similar railing and turned newels. Floor boards appear to date from the enlargement of the porch. There is pierced wood skirting filling in from the floor to ground line.

Physical evidence indicates a rear porch at the northeast corner, formerly.

6. Chimneys: There is one modern central brick chimney, though there was none in that location originally. There is an original brick chimney near the center of the east wall, but its height appears to have been reduced.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance on the south front is set in a brick recess and has plain wood trim. The door has one horizontal panel below and a pair of tall glazed panels above with semicircular heads. The panels have mouldings part of which are projecting. The corners of the lower panel are beveled concavely. Each glazed panel is a single piece of glass, etched with a decorative pattern. There is a stone threshold. The rear doors are modern.
 - b. Windows: Windows on the south and west sides, one on the east, and two in the north gable, have cast-iron label mouldings at the heads. Most others have a flat brick arch. All have heavy wooden sills.. Sash are replacements and most openings also have fixed storm sash. There are two small windows on the west side, and one on the east, under the eaves at second-story level. At the center of the west side is a wooden oriel with a door opening (now filled with louvers) which once gave access--or appeared to give access--to a roof deck. This oriel has a steep gable with tracery verge boards.

Most window openings now have louvered shutters which can hardly be original, are fixed, and terminate below the label (lower than the top of the window opening).

The main north and south gables each contain a rectangular louvered opening at attic level.

Two first-story windows on the west, three on the south, and one on the east, are paneled below the glazed portion. The openings continue to the water table. The ones on the west and two on the south probably allowed access to the porches at one time.

8. Roof: The roof is gabled. The highest section is over the west part of the house, the ridge extending north and south. One lower section with an east-west ridge covers the southeast portion. Another of the same height with a north-south ridge covers the northeast portion. There is a small deck near the center of the roof system. The covering is now asphalt composition shingles over older wooden shingles.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor. Two front rooms (south) open from a short central entrance and stair hall, and behind them (north) is another room on each side. There is a small rear hall and storage room behind it. At the northwest is a small room (actually an enclosed porch) which is a modern addition, taking up part of the area originally occupied by a one-and-a-half story wing connecting to the carriage house.
- b. Second floor. The stair lands just to the rear of center. On the west side of a central hall are two bedrooms; on the east side, one. There is a small room above the front of the entrance hall, and another at the northeast corner.
- c. Basement. There is a small basement at the northwest corner, which is old. This was in recent times extended under the central western area to accommodate heating equipment.

2. Stairways: The stair ascends 12 risers to a landing and then divides. At right angles to the main flight are two short ones or 3 risers each, one leading to the east bedroom and one to the central second-story hall. There is an open string with ornamental brackets. At the lower end is a turned newel and a smaller one on the railing at the top. There are two thin turned tapered balusters per tread, moulded near the lower end. Treads have moulded nosing. Where the stair turns at the well, the theme of the scrolled brackets continues around the well as a wave motive, in low relief. The handrail is round in section. At basement stair, probably not original, is located behind the rear hall. A narrow attic stair, with winders, rises between the two west bedrooms.

3. Flooring: First floor framing is supported on exterior foundations, joists resting on a thin sill, one interior foundation wall under the east stair-hall partition, and a hewn girder under the west stair-hall partition. There is a similar girder under the partition between the west rooms. Original floor boards are now covered with narrow oak finish flooring.

The bedrooms on the second story retain the original flooring. The hall has been covered with narrow oak finish.

4. Wall and ceiling finishes: Walls are plastered (lime-sand plaster), generally directly on the masonry of exterior walls and the brick bearing partition. Other partitions are frame, plastered with sawn wood lath. Ceilings are plastered on wooden lath. There are no cornices. All wall and ceiling surfaces are now covered with paper.
5. Doorways and doors: There is a wide opening with double doors between the east rooms on the first story, while other openings are single. Typical doors are four-paneled. The upper pair of panels is taller than the lower ones, and have triangular "pointed arch" heads. Panel mouldings consist of two recesses. Some doors have these "Gothic" panels on both sides, others on one side. Some doors have all-rectangular panels. The double door has a five panel design, a pair of vertical panels below, a horizontal panel, and a tall pair at the top with rectangular heads.

Second-story doors follow designs and variations similar to those on the first story. Generally, their panels are not moulded (i.e., a single recess rather than a double one).

6. Door and window trim: Door trim is of two kinds: (a) architraves with fascias, (b) architraves 5" wide in the form of a cyma recta moulding. Window trim resembles the first kind; in the front rooms it extends to within 6" of the floor, terminating in the window stool. These windows have a wood panel integral with the lower sash; it occupies about one third of that sash. While not original, they may reflect comparable paneling in the original sash.
7. Other trim: Bases are plain on the second story. All woodwork is painted, except newels and stair rail. Between the west rooms on the first story is a wide opening, now filled with modern shelving on either side of an original door (rehung).
8. Hardware: Most doors are hung on what appear to be original hinges: plain butts, three on larger doors and two on smaller ones. They have mortice locks and porcelain knobs. The double doors have ornamental hinges.

On a door to the front room in the attic is an original cast-iron thumbblatch.

9. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Lighting: There are no original fixtures.
- b. Heating: At the northeast corner of the east front room is a functional fireplace, probably intended for a coal grate. The mantelpiece is black imitation marble with paneled pilasters and paneled frieze with a shield at the center. The panels are mottled gray. The mantel shelf is curved outward at the center and rounded at the corners.

On the west wall of the southwest room is a decorative mantelpiece (not a fireplace) of brown imitation marble with black panels in the pilasters and frieze with incised ornament in gold.

Some ornamental cast-iron registers in the main rooms indicate a warm-air furnace at some time before the present installation.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: This house is located at the northeast corner of West Mansion and North Kalamazoo Streets. It faces south. Walks are modern. The site is virtually level. Landscaping is informal.
- 2. Outbuildings: There is a carriage house at the north side (see HABS No. MI-236 A), originally linked to the house by a one-and-a-half story wing.

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